


DOWNTOWN DECO · TOUR

TERRE HAUTE · INDIANA



The Art Deco and Art Moderne styles were intended to reflect the aspirations of the new 20th Century. They were Cubist in derivation and began to be seen in the years 1908 - 1912. Acceptance was set by the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs* held in Paris in 1925. It is that exposition that led to the term "Art Deco" though the term itself wasn't coined until 1966.

Buildings took a simpler more blocklike form, with flat or low pitched roofs. The upper floors of taller building were stepped back, giving the impression of an Aztec pyramid. Decoration of stylized floral or geometric ornamentation was frequently applied to building surfaces and fixtures. The Art Moderne style is more austere and functional with a strong horizontal emphasis and little decoration. Often there are horizontal bandings (called *streamlining*) found on the facades.

The eight buildings on the Downtown Deco Tour were built between 1921 and the late 1940s. Terre Haute has other Art Deco structures plus buildings with Art Deco details located throughout the city. It is gratifying that many remain a part of our community's architectural heritage.



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**I. United States Post Office and Federal Building, 7th and Cherry
1933, Miller and Yeager**

Elements of the building are a juxtaposition of horizontal and vertical lines. The vertical lines are created by the fluted piers, the decorative windows, cast aluminum panels, and the three story entrance openings. Helping to reduce the severity of the mass, these verticals provide a lift to the building, which is immediately capped by the heavy horizontal mass of the high flat frieze and then brought back to earth by the massive corner piers which are almost triple the size of the piers between the windows. The interior of the courtroom, like the vast majority of the building, retains much of its original appearance, including decorative painting, murals, light fixtures, wall sconces, walnut paneling, and grillwork.

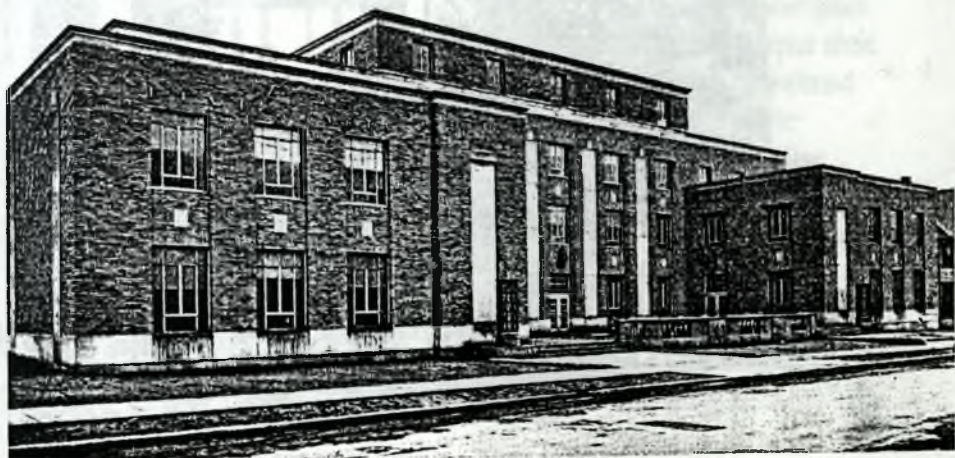
An American eagle, carved in a flat geometrical style, may be seen in the frieze over each wide window or door area. The cast aluminum metalwork of the windows and doors are geometrical renditions of leaves and tendrils. Note also the barely visible palmetto scroll molding carved at the bottom of the entablature. Geometric forms are seen inside and out, visible in the metal work, the ceiling decoration of the main hall, the door handles, the bulletin boards, and in the interior and exterior lamps.

2. Fine Arts Building, Chestnut St, West of 7th 1940, Miller and Yeager

Indiana State University's Fine Arts building was dedicated on March 17th, 1940 by Eleanor Roosevelt, as a part of a three day 70th anniversary celebration for what was then Indiana State Normal. Originally the building housed the Art Department on the first floor, the Commerce Department on the second, and the Music Department was housed on the third floor and penthouse.

The structure is built of tan brick with both plain and carved slabs of limestone used for decoration. The walls enclosed over 842,000 square feet of space. Decorative bas relief panels are found above the first and second floor windows and a bubbling fountain is centered on the flagstone terrace of the building. The lettering on the facade and the decorative barrel lights are made of bronze.

The main lobby has variegated polished marble walls. The entrances to the gallery and to several sculpture niches have fluted surfaces reminiscent of ancient columns. Above each of the doors to the gallery are octagonal shaped decorations inset into the walls. The rectilinear treatment of the ceilings, the complementing openings created by the windows and displays cases located on each side of the lobby, and the inlaid square floor tiles all combine to create a *modernistic* view.



3. Merchants Building, 1 South 6th 1930, Miller and Yeager

The building opened under the name of The National Building, taking the name from the National House, a hotel which had stood on that site from the mid-1850s until its demolition to make way for the current structure. The building is very simple in form, leaning more towards the Art Moderne rather than Art Deco. Some geometric ornamentation may be seen above the doorways and in the entablature, but it is very restrained. The first floor has been completely remodeled; the only portion of the original appearance that has been retained is that of the entrance to the second floor.



4. The Sycamore Building, 19 South 6th 1921, Hoggson Brothers of New York City

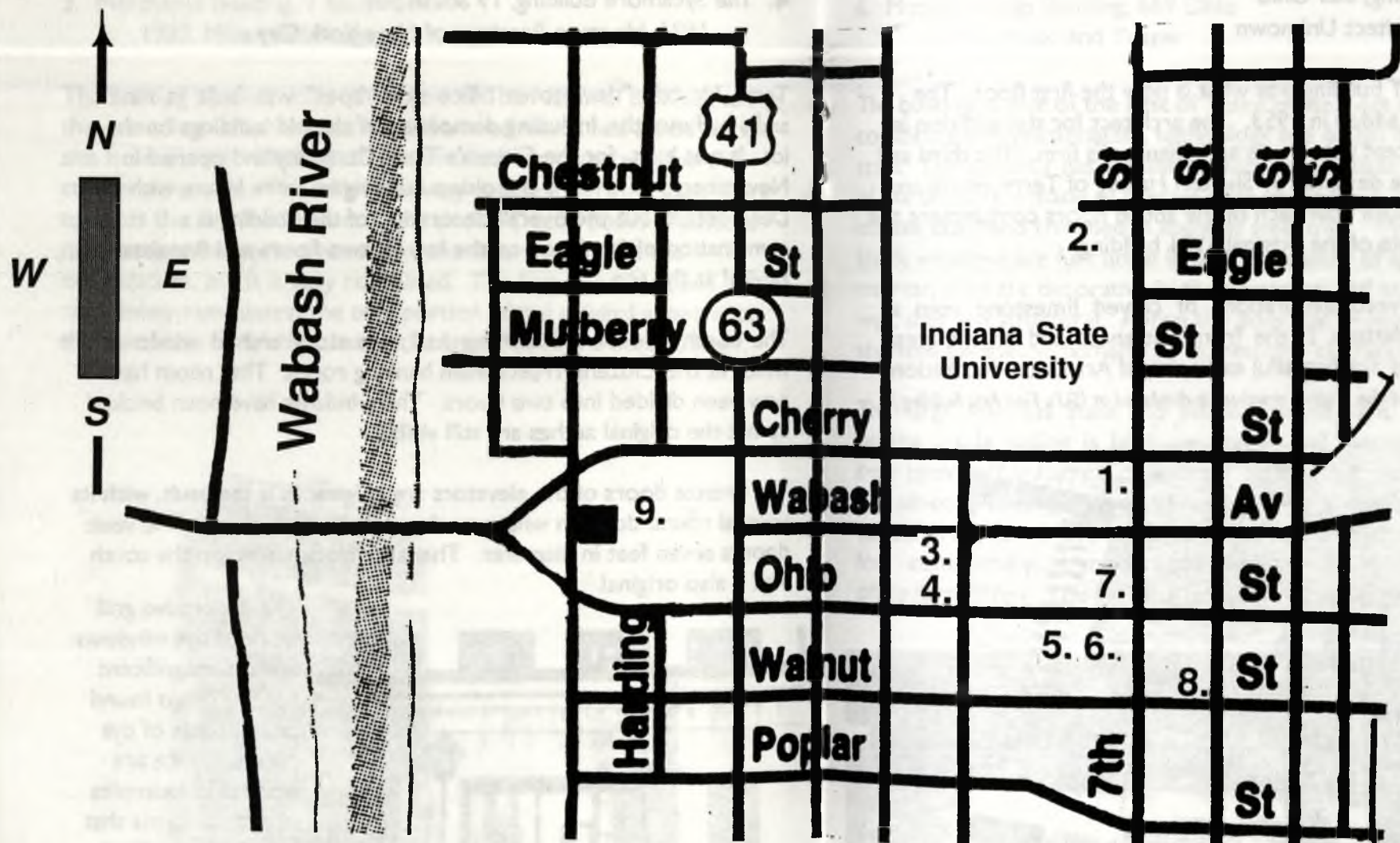
Terre Haute's "downtown office skyscraper" was built in nine and a half months, including demolition of the old buildings on the lot. It was built for the Citizen's Trust Company and opened in November, 1921. It is the oldest building in Terre Haute with Art Deco details, but the overall decoration of the building is a combination of Art Deco on the lowest two floors and Renaissance Revival at the top.

The north side of the building had two story arched windows which lit the Citizens Trust's main banking room. That room has now been divided into two floors. The windows have been bricked up but the original arches are still visible.

The bronze doors of the elevators are original as is the vault, with its unusual round door, in what was the main banking room. The vault door is seven feet in diameter. The large clock visible on the south wall is also original.

The decorative grill work of the windows and the magnificent hanging lamps found on each side of the main entrance are wonderful examples of natural forms that have been stylized into geometric patterns. Similar decoration may also be seen in the light fixtures of the Federal Courtroom.





1. United States Post Office
and Federal Building

2. Indiana State University
Fine Arts Building

3. Merchants Building

4. The Sycamore Building

5. A T & T Building

6. Mutual Savings Building

7. Sheldon Swope Art Museum

8. Teamsters Building

9. City Hall

**5. A T & T Building, 663 Ohio
1931, Architect Unknown**

The original AT&T building was what is now the first floor. The second floor was added in 1953. The architect for this addition is also unknown except that it was an Indianapolis firm. The third and fourth floors were designed by Shelton Hannig of Terre Haute and added in 1968. Note how each of the added floors complement and blend with the style of the original 1931 building.

Geometrical stylized decorations of carved limestone seen at the top of the pilasters, in the front entrances and on the west side of the building are beautiful examples of Art Deco decoration.
(Note: A photograph of the original structure is displayed at ISU's Fine Arts Building.)



6. Mutual Savings Building, 669 Ohio
1941, Miller and Yeager

The building is one of the best of Terre Haute's Art Deco structures, combining the functionalism, technology and design demanded by style. The exterior has a polished black marble base while the body of the building is made of precast slabs (made from buff colored marble dust) and trimmed in stainless steel trim. The architectural block windows are functional in their admittance of light into the interior, they are decorative in their patterns, and as a part of the wall, they are structural. Above the door and windows are incised stylized geometric human figures, beautiful examples of period art.

The large stainless steel and plaster central light fixture visible on the inside ceiling is both decorative and functional. It not only provided a source of indirect lighting but also was the vent for air-conditioning. Originally there was a combination leather upholstered settee and desk centered under this fixture, while four complementing modernistic desks made up the rest of the office furnishings. The paneling is walnut trimmed in white birch.



7. The Sheldon Swope Art Museum will present a slide show giving a general introduction on Art Deco at 2:30, 3:00 and 3:30 p.m.



8. Teamsters Building Local #144, 125 South 8th
1949, Vonnegut, Wright and Yeager of Indianapolis

The union bought the land from the Knights of Pythias in 1941 but did not begin construction until 1949, making it one of the last structures built in Terre Haute in the Art Deco style. The building remains almost unchanged from the original design with the exception of the oak front door, doorway and sidelights. The architect designed the building so that a second floor could be added at a later date. Remaining original interior details include oak doors, window moldings, and the oak entrance seat. Ten inch stainless steel letters proclaiming "Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers" are original and typical of the Art Moderne style of lettering.



9. City Hall, 17 Harding
1938, Miller and Yeager.

City Hall opened in 1938, almost a year after its structural completion. The delay was due to controversy over interior painting and furnishings. The building has a basement, two stories, an attic and a penthouse. The mass is horizontal with a juxtaposition of vertical elements created by the two story main entrance and the vertically paired windows. The building, built of reinforced concrete covered with a facade of dressed limestone blocks, is relatively simple with little ornamentation.

The metal work of the front entrance, windows and door grills are designed in simple geometric forms. More elaborate are the stylized standing lamps, reminiscent of ancient Greek cresets or torches, flanking the main entrance.

The play of light across the surface of the structure itself creates most of the ornamental interest. Simplicity and a block-like form have created a beautiful Art Moderne building.

Donations to the VPA to help cover the cost of tour brochures would be greatly appreciated.

Special thanks are due to the following for their help in producing this tour:

The City of Terre Haute
Indiana State University
The Paper Chase
The Sheldon Swope Art Museum

Sunset Harbor, Inc.
The Vigo County Historical Society
The Vigo County Public Library
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Gene Vaughn

The Vigo Preservation Alliance is a not-for-profit corporation whose members are interested in the preservation of our community's landmarks. The Alliance believes that through education the community can be made aware that historic buildings and sites offer an architectural heritage which increases the quality of life and enhances the attractiveness and growth of the community. The Vigo Preservation Alliance is an affiliate member of the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana.

**If you are interested in membership please write the
Vigo Preservation Alliance
P.O. Box 2020, Terre Haute, IN 47802.**



SUNDAY · SEPT · 27 · 1992

2:00 - 4:00 P.M. - FREE

TERRE HAUTE · INDIANA

TOUR BY CAR, BICYCLE, OR ON FOOT

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